

INTERNATIONAL RAINY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL

IRLBC

NEWS RELEASE

May 30, 2003

ADVISORY ON DRY CONDITIONS IN RAINY-NAMAKAN BASIN

Very dry conditions over the Rainy-Namakan basin during the past 10 months have caused low water conditions on Rainy and Namakan Lakes. After the record basin rainfall in June last year and resultant high water levels on Rainy Lake and to a lesser extent on the Namakan Chain of Lakes, basin conditions turned dry and have remained dry. Board data indicates that precipitation over the Rainy-Namakan basin through the winter period from November 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003 was the driest since Board records start in 1901. This spring has seen little improvement in the dry conditions. Water levels on Rainy and Namakan Lakes have been below their respective International Joint Commission (IJC) rule curve bands since early May. The level of Rainy Lake has fallen to its "Drought Line" (DL), as defined in the Commission's January 2001 Consolidated Order for regulation of the level of Rainy Lake and of other Boundary Waters in the Rainy Lake watershed. The outflow from Rainy Lake was reduced to its IJC minimum of 100 m³/s (3,530 ft³/s) at the beginning of April and has remained there, while Namakan Lake outflow was reduced to near its IJC minimum outflow in early April and is presently at its IJC minimum of 30 m³/s (1,060 ft³/s). Water levels on both lakes will remain low as long as the dry conditions persist in the basin.

The level of Rainy Lake today is 336.69 m (1,104.63 ft.), 59 cm (23 in.) below its lower rule curve (LRC) and 1 cm (0.4 in.) below its DL, falling slowly. For the end of May, the current level is the lowest since 1958 and the second lowest since the rule curves were implemented in 1949. The lowest level recorded in recent memory, although a fall event, was on October 14, 1998 at 336.48 m (1,103.93 ft.). The level of Namakan Lake today is 339.90 m (1,115.15 ft.), 54 cm (21 in.) below its LRC, but well above its DL by 95 cm (37 in.) and rising slowly.

The Commission's 2001 Consolidated Order establishes required minimum outflows for Rainy and Namakan Lakes, whenever lake levels fall below their respective IJC rule curve bands. The Order provides that the outflows may be further reduced to not less than 65 m³/s (2,300 ft³/s) for Rainy Lake and to not less than 15 m³/s (1,060 ft³/s) for Namakan Lake, if lake levels fall below the respective "Drought Lines" defined in the Order. The Order provides that any such reduction is at the discretion of the International Rainy Lake Board of Control (IRLBC), following appropriate consultations with resource agencies and affected municipalities and others.

The Board has been closely monitoring hydrologic conditions within the basin this spring, particularly with respect to water levels and flows. The Board has reviewed the current low water situation on Rainy Lake with regard to possible outflow reductions related to lake levels falling below the Rainy Lake DL. The Board has concluded that no further reductions in Rainy Lake outflow are deemed advisable at this time. Key factors in this decision are: the month of

June typically has a high probability for rainfall which could help to mitigate the current dry conditions and; any flow reductions at this time would adversely impact spawning Sturgeon in the Rainy River. The Board will continue to closely monitor the situation, taking appropriate action as warranted by future conditions in the basin and keeping the public advised.

The Board recommends that property owners and users of the system continue to keep themselves updated on basin conditions for at least the next few weeks. Up-to-date information can be found on Boise's web site (lakes.bc.com), on the Lake of the Woods Control Board site (www.lwcb.ca) and on the St. Paul District Corps of Engineers web site (www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil). Persons can also call the Board's engineering advisors, Rick Walden (819-997-2529) or Ed Eaton (651-290-5617).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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